

## Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SSC-01 AGR-10 AGRE-00 EB-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5393

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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USDEL MTN GENEVA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 14370

PASS AGRICULTURE FOR BUTZ AND HUME

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR UK

SUBJECT: RT. HON. JOHN SILKIN APPOINTED MINISTER OF  
AGRICULTURE IN UK GOVERNMENT RE-SHUFFLE

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN GOVERNMENT RE-SHUFFLE ANNOUNCED FRIDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 10, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE FREDERICK PEART  
BECOMES LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE LORDS. HIS  
PLACE IN AGRICULTURE IS TAKEN BY MR. JOHN SILKIN.  
FORMERLY MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. END SUMMARY

1. IN A MAJOR RESTRUCTURING OF THE UK GOVERNMENT  
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ANNOUNCED FRIDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 10, THE MINISTER OF

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD, THE RT. HON. FREDERICK PEART MP, BECAME LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF HOUSE OF LORDS. MR. PEART HAS RECEIVED A LIFE PEERAGE AND GIVES UP HIS SEAT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS NECESSITATING A BY-ELECTION. THE NEW MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE IS THE RT. HON. JOHN ERNEST SILKIN WHO UP TO FRIDAY WAS MINISTER OF PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. MR. SILKIN WAS NUMBER 2 AT ENVIRONMENT BEHIND MR. SHORE, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, BUT CARRIED CABINET STATUS IN ORDER TO GIVE THE HUGE ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT A SECOND CABINET PLACE. WITH HIS MOVE TO AGRICULTURE, MR. SILKIN'S FORMER POST LAPSES.

2. MR. SILKIN IS THE YOUNGEST OF THREE SONS DISTINGUISHED IN PUBLIC SERVICE BORN TO THE LATE FIRST BARON SILKIN, PC,CH. THE ELDEST OF THESE, ARTHUR SILKIN IS NOW IN ACADEMIC LIFE BUT WAS FORMERLY A SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANT; THE SECOND, THE RT. HON. SAMUEL SILKIN QC,MP IS ATTORNEY-GENERAL IN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

3. JOHN ERNEST SILKIN WAS BORN MARCH 18, 1923. HIS SECONDARY EDUCATION WAS AT DULWICH COLLEGE (SE LONDON). HE JOINED THE ROYAL NAVY IN 1941 AND SERVED ON WARSHIPS DURING THE WAR. HIS UNIVERSITY EDUCATION WAS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WALES AND TRINITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE. HE GAINED HIS BA DEGREE IN 1944, LLB IN 1946 AND MA IN 1949. AFTER STANDING UNSUCCESSFULLY AS A LABOUR CANDIDATE FOR A NUMBER OF SEATS IN THE 1950'S HE WAS ELECTED MP FOR DEPTFORD IN 1963 AND FOLLOWING THE RE-ORGANISATION OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES HAS BEEN MP FOR LEWISHAM-DEPTFORD SINCE 1974. DEPTFORD IS A LARGELY WORKING-CLASS INDUSTRIAL AND DOCKSIDE CONSTITUENCY IN SE LONDON.

4. EARLY IN HIS PARLIAMENTARY CAREER, MR. SILKIN SERVED IN A NUMBER OF MINOR GOVERNMENT POSTS. HE WAS A LORD COMMISSIONER AT THE TREASURY JANUARY-APRIL 1966, TREASURER OF THE HOUSEHOLD AND GOVERNMENT DEPUTY CHIEF WHIP BETWEEN APRIL AND JULY 1966. HE WAS THEN PROMOTED TO PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY AND GOVERNMENT CHIEF WHIP, POSTS HELD FROM 1966-69 AND WAS DEPUTY LEADER

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OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS 1968-69. FROM 1969 TO THE DEFEAT OF THE WILSON GOVERNMENT IN THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1970, HE WAS MINISTER OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND WORKS. UPON THE RETURN TO POWER OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT IN 1974, HE WAS MADE MINISTER OF PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THE POST HE HELD UNTIL FRIDAY LAST. MR. SILKIN MARRIED IN 1950 ROSAMUND JOHN, AN ACTRESS WELL-KNOWN IN BRITISH FILMS IN THE

1940'S. THEY HAVE ONE SON.

5. MR. SILKIN CANDIDLY ADMITS HE KNOWS LITTLE ABOUT AGRICULTURAL MATTERS AND PRESS COMMENT ON HIS APPOINTMENT NOTES THAT IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME BEFORE HE ACHIEVES THE FRIENDLY FAMILIAR, IF AT TIMES ABRASIVE. RELATIONSHIP ACHIEVED BY MR. PEART WITH THE LEADERS OF BRITAIN'S FARMERS IN THE NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION AND ELSEWHERE. THE JUNIOR MINISTERS IN MR. SILKIN'S NEW DEPARTMENT,

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PASS AGRICULTURE

MR. BISHOP AND MR. STRANG, REMAIN IN THEIR FORMER POSTS AS DOES THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND, MR. MILLAN

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SCOTTISH INTERNAL AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS.

COMMENT: IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE NEW MINISTER REPRESENTS A DENSELY POPULATED WORKING-CLASS CONSTITUENCY WHERE FOOD PRICES HAVE A MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ELECTORATE THAN FARMERS' RETURNS. FURTHERMORE, MR. SILKIN STANDS TO THE LEFT OF CENTRE IN THE LABOUR PARTY. ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE CABINET RE-SHUFFLE WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR AGRICULTURE IS THE MOVE OF MRS. SHIRLEY WILLIAMS FROM SECRETARY OF UNCLASSIFIED

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STATE FOR PRICES AND CONSUMER PROTECTION TO SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE. MRS. WILLIAMS HAD BECOME FIRMLY IDENTIFIED IN THE PUBLIC EYE WITH CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND AS THE HOUSEWIVES' FRIEND. THE NEW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS IS MR. ROY HATTERSLEY, FORMERLY MINISTER OF STATE AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE WITH CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH EC MATTERS. MR. SILKIN SO FAR IN HIS GOVERNMENT CAREER HAS HAD MUCH LESS CONTACT WITH COMMUNITY AFFAIRS AND HAS VIRTUALLY NO BACKGROUND FOR THE COMING STRUGGLES OVER THE CAP WHICH WILL BEGIN EARLY OCTOBER.

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** EAGR, PGOV, UK, (SILKIN, JOHN), (PEART, FREDERICK)  
**To:** STATE  
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**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006